

STRONG Q.P.R. XI HAND OUT LESSON

FIRST Division title chasers Queens Park Rangers sent down a strong side to Loakes Park on Tuesday night and gave Wycombe Wanderers a lesson in the finer aspects of the game with a convincing 3-1 triumph.

Although there were no 'star' names like Stan Bowles or Gerry Francis in this Rangers XI, all 12 players were highly experienced and almost all of them have had first team experience at one time or another. This team obviously plays together regularly for they were a fine unit, knew each others' capabilities and played some lovely football at times.

The only thing that spoilt the game for me (and I suspect many of the fans) was Q.P.R.'s offside trap which caught Wycombe time and again. Although highly effective, this denied Wanderers the chances to let their game flow and as a result, much of the play was disjointed through stoppages.

Nevertheless there was some fine football at times and leading this five star show from the Londoners was Martyn Busby, who used to play for the Blues as a reserve many moons ago. A shocking leg injury threatened to end this player's career not long ago but he showed on Tuesday what a fine footballer he is. It seemed Martyn was at half pace for most of the time but his distribution was superb and the long flowing passes that came from either foot will long be remembered.

It was Busby's service and the skills of the Rangers front

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 1, Q.P.R. XI 3

runners that caused Wycombe many problems. Peter Eastoe, a £70,000 reserve from Swindon, gave the home defence no end of trouble with his deft touches while John Beck's ball control was also too much of a handful. As if that wasn't enough to worry about, there was the danger of centre half Tagg who scored two goals from set pieces. With such a wealth of talent in their reserves, it's no surprise Dave Sexton's team are at the summit of British football.

So for Wanderers, this was a night when they had to take a back seat for a change. Fielding an injury-hit side, they had to call on Terry Male and Geoff Banks from local Hellenic League Burnham who both acquitted themselves well. The reshuffled team with Paul Birdseye in midfield and Mick Hollifield up front were just not able to cope with Rangers' talent.

FINE GOALKEEPING

Strangely enough, Wanderers had a number of chances in the first half which might have produced goals but none were taken and it was Rangers who went in 2-0 up before the break. It might well have been more but for the fine goalkeeping of Peter Spittle who brought frequent applause from the crowd.

Spittle, late off his line, parried Eastoe's 20th minute shot brilliantly but was badly positioned for the resulting cor-

ner which Tagg headed firmly home from five yards. Spittle was behind the centre half who had a free header.

The goalkeeper produced another blinding save from Busby's near perfect half volley five minutes later but had no chance when John Cunningham netted after Eastoe's shot had been half blocked in the 38th minute. Wycombe's best move came just before the break when Hollifield and Graham Mackenzie sent Dylan Evans clear but the latter's shot finished wide of the far post. Once again it was an unhappy night for the Welshman.

Former Walton amateur Richard Teale saved well from half time substitute Tony Horseman early in the second half but it was QPR who continued to dictate play and a third goal after 50 minutes was no surprise. Tagg rising well to nod home Tony Martin's 40 yard free kick.

Rangers eased visibly after that third goal but still oozed class whenever in possession. Their relaxation allowed Wanderers to show their own skills at times but once again their lack of power up front cost them dearly. Midfield was also a little disappointing for despite Busby, this was the department Wycombe might have dominated with their regular trio.

Hollifield, Wanderers' best player on the night, was foiled twice by Teale in the closing stages while Evans had a

justifiable penalty appeal turned down before the Blues notched a consolation goal near the end. A series of headers eventually carved out a chance which Horseman netted from an acute angle.

With a full side, Wanderers would have given this talented Rangers side a far better run for their money. But on Tuesday there was no doubt the better team whose superior skills were a pleasure to watch from the stands.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle (sub. J. Maskell 45 mins); G. Banks (sub. T. Male 48 mins); K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; D. Alexander, P. Birdseye, G. Mackenzie; T. Male (sub. H. Kennedy 21 mins); sub. A. Horseman 45 mins); D. Evans; M. Hollifield.

Q.P.R.: R. Teale; D. Shanks, R. Abbott, M. Teig, A. Merlini; J. Cunningham, M. Busby, S. Adams (sub. D. Evans 70 mins); P. Eastoe, M. Nutt, J. Beck.

Referee: A. Rogers (High Wycombe).
Half-time: 0-2. **Goalscorers:** Q.P.R. — Tagg 2 (20, 50); Cunningham (38). Wycombe — Horseman (89).

Attendance: 900.